

Global Governance: German Perspectives on Multilateralism and Multipolarity

18 January – 29 January

CATEGORY Social Sciences, Politics & History

COURSE STRUCTURE

You will receive a total of **45 hours of academic lessons** (one lesson equals 45 minutes). Lessons will comprise lectures, group work, discussion sessions, and excursions.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

HUWISU courses are grouped into different time sessions. Your course will take place in the **AFTERNOON SESSION**.

Monday-Friday: 2:00 pm – 6:00 pm (except the first Monday: 2:30pm – 4:45pm)

COURSE LANGUAGE

This course is taught in **English**, including the readings. For the understanding of the texts and the discussions in class, a language-level of B2 (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) is required.

TARGET GROUP

Primarily, but not exclusively, **undergraduate students** of all subjects with an interest in global governance, international politics, the global economy, and the history of international relations.

CREDITS & CERTIFICATES

Participants will receive **6 ECTS** credit points and a certificate if they attend regularly (at least 80% attendance), participate actively and fulfil all course assignments. Additionally, six weeks after the end of the course a Transcript of Records is issued by Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. All courses are accredited according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

In addition to the academic program, you are invited to **join our cultural and social program**. We offer a fine selection of interesting activities that aim to give you an unforgettable stay in Berlin. Through excursions, social gatherings, and sport activities, you have the opportunity to get to know the city, the university, and to meet students from all parts of the world. **Costs for these offers are included in the program fee.** Below, you find examples of previously offered cultural activities. You will be informed about the respective cultural program shortly before the start of the program via email as well as during the course period.



POLITICAL AND HISTORICAL GUIDED TOURS

- Federal Chancellery (*Bundeskanzleramt*)
- German Parliament (*Bundestag*)
- House of Representatives (*Abgeordnetenhaus*)
- Topography of Terror exhibition
- Political Archive of the Federal Foreign Office

CULTURAL GUIDED TOURS

- Kreuzberg Tour
- Museum Island (*Museumsinsel*)
- Berlin Cathedral (*Berliner Dom*)
- Daytrip to Potsdam
- Exhibitions

SOCIAL GATHERINGS

- Welcome Session
- Ice Skating
- Farewell Party

EXPECTATIONS & POLICIES

Preparation for lively discussions in the classroom: Be on time, have at least the required readings completed, and points in mind for discussion or clarification.

Assignments: Complete all assignments according to the specified requirements on the schedule including handing them over to the lecturer.

Commitment in class: Pay particular attention to the lecturer and respect differences of opinions (classmates', lecturers').

Academic guidelines: Comply with academic integrity policies (such as no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical) especially the academic honor code and the student code of conduct.

Attendance policy: No unexcused absences are permitted. Students must follow teachers' instructions to catch up on missed work – to excuse absence please contact the HUWISU office.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will give an overview of how global governance works in a world of hyper-connectedness, diluted power, fragmented organizational structures, intensifying great power competition, and exceeded planetary boundaries. The focus will be on the actors, institutions and ideas of world politics today – from the UN family and Agenda 2030 to Great Powers to thematic alliances such as the Paris Climate Accords.

Some hope Germany will take on the mantle of “leader of the free world”. While it is true that Germany has entered a phase of “new responsibility” in its foreign policy and remains strongly committed to the rules-based international order and global sustainability, it is becoming more and more difficult for such middle powers to project its influence into the world. The course will take this German perspective as a starting point to try to understand the state of global governance more broadly. Here, emphasis will be put on climate diplomacy and the securitization of multilateralism as these are important features of German foreign relations.

Who are the indispensable nations? Who are the spoilers? What kind of cooperation is needed to save the planet? Whose Global Order is it?

We will look at multilateral and unilateral behavior of states as well as at recent efforts to introduce sustainability into global governance. We will also identify non-Western visions of global governance. Finally, the course will revolve around the question of how to make the global liberal institutionalist order (and ultimately, our world) more resilient in the face of new authoritarian challenges – after all, this is what Germany and other countries like it are (still) striving to do.

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- understand core concepts of global governance and power in International Relations
- enrich them with a specifically German worldview of international cooperation
- apply these concepts to the institutions and organizations of our present global order
- analyze foreign policy ideas and behavior of pivotal states in world politics
- come up with concrete policy recommendations for their own countries

ASSIGNMENT INFO

In order to gain 6 ECTS, all students are required to attend class regularly, read all assigned texts, hold a brief presentation (20 min) and most importantly: to participate actively in classroom discussions. The topic of the presentations will be decided during the first session. In addition, BA students ought to hand in an academic essay of at least 2.000 words that answers a given policy question as follow-up work to the course. By contrast, MA students should define their own research question to be answered in an academic essay of at least 2.000 words.

The final grade will be composed by evaluating the in-class presentation (30%) and the essay (40%). Active participation during class discussions will be taken into account as well (30%). A minimum of 80% class attendance is required. Full ECTS points will only be awarded if all of the mentioned components are fulfilled.

READINGS

Required:

Reading materials will be available via Moodle during the course.

Suggested:

Ian Bremmer: *Every Nation for Itself*, Penguin 2012.

Ivo H. Daalder / James M. Lindsay: *The Empty Throne*, Public Affairs 2018.

G. John Ikenberry: *A World Safe for Democracy*, Yale 2020.

Ivan Krastev: *The Light that Failed*, Penguin 2020.

Oliver Stuenkel: *Post-Western World*, Polity 2016.

YOUR INSTRUCTOR

Dr. Christian E. Rieck is an Associate Professor at the Chair of War Studies at the University of Potsdam. He is a Visiting Professor at University College Dublin and also teaches at the interface between international relations and contemporary history at Universidad Rey Juan Carlos in Madrid, as well as at Humboldt University in Berlin, his alma mater.

He is a frequent guest lecturer at universities around the world, most recently at the University of Western Australia in Perth, the University of Buenos Aires and RSIS in Singapore. After studies of law, politics and economics in Bayreuth, Seville and at HU Berlin, he earned a postgraduate degree in Latin American Studies at the University of Oxford. Further studies in Venice, Hamburg and at the European University Institute followed. He holds a PhD in Diplomatic History from the University of Potsdam.

Previous posts include research and policy work at Konrad Adenauer Stiftung in Berlin, at the German Institute for Global and Area Studies GIGA in Hamburg, as well as a Carlo Schmid Fellowship at the United Nations in Mexico City. He was a Visiting Fellow at the United States Studies Centre of the University of Sydney in 2025.

COURSE SCHEDULE

A detailed syllabus containing the concrete topics, research questions, readings and assignments for every class will be made available online before the start of the course.

The course will include three talks and discussions by guest speakers from relevant federal ministries, think tanks, embassies or the Bundestag.

The course and its syllabus are subject to change. Last update: January 2026